

The Exploits of Elaine

A Detective Novel and a Motion Picture Drama

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SYNOPSIS.

The New York police are mystified by a series of murders of prominent men. The principal clue to the murderer is the warning letter which is sent the victims, signed with a "clutching hand." The latest victim of the mysterious assassin is Taylor Dodge, the insurance president. His daughter, Elaine, employs Craig Kennedy, the famous scientific detective, to try to unravel the mystery. What Kennedy accomplishes is told by his friend Jennings, a newspaper man. Clutching Hand tried to kill Elaine by means of a diabolical device which generates a poison in the wall paper of her room that is deadly to breathe for any length of time. Again Kennedy's scientific knowledge is brought into play just in season to save the heroine from death.

SIXTH EPISODE

"The Vampire."

Kennedy went the next day to the Dodge house, and, as usual, Perry Bennett, Elaine's lawyer, was there in the library with Elaine, still going over the Clutching Hand case in their endeavor to track down the mysterious master criminal.

Bennett seemed as deeply as ever in love with Elaine. Still, as Jennings admitted Craig, it was sufficiently evident by the manner in which Elaine left Bennett and ran to greet Craig that she had the highest regard for him.

"I've brought you a little document that may interest you," remarked Kennedy, reaching into his pocket and pulling out an envelope.

Elaine tore it open and looked at the paper within.

"Oh, how thoughtful of you!" she exclaimed in surprise.

It was a permit from the police made out in her name allowing her to carry a revolver.

A moment later, Kennedy reached into his coat pocket and produced a little automatic which he handed to her.

"Thank you," she cried, eagerly.

Elaine examined the gun with interest, then, raising it, pointed it playfully at Bennett.

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Kennedy, taking her arm quickly and gently, deflecting the weapon away. "You mustn't think it is a toy. It explodes at a mere touch of the trigger—when that safety ratchet is turned."

Bennett had realized the danger and had jumped back, almost mechanically. As he did so, he bumped into a suit of medieval armor standing by the wall, knocking it over with a resounding crash.

"I beg pardon," he ejaculated, "I'm very sorry. That was very awkward of me."

Jennings, who had been busy about the portieres at the doorway, started to pick up the fallen knight.

"Too bad, too bad," apologized Bennett profusely. "I really forgot how close I was to the thing."

"Oh, never mind," returned Elaine, a little crestfallen, "it is smashed all right—but it was my fault. Jennings, send for someone to repair it."

It was late that night that a masked figure succeeded in raising itself to the narrow ornamental ledge under Elaine's bedroom window.

Elaine was a light sleeper, and, besides, Rusty, her faithful collie, now fully recovered from the poison, was in her room.

Rusty growled and the sudden noise awakened her.

Startled, Elaine instantly thought of the automatic. She reached under her pillow, keeping very quiet, and drew forth the gun that Craig had given her. Stealthily concealing her actions under the covers, she leveled the automatic at the figure silhouetted in her window and fired three times.

The figure fell back.

Down in the street below, the assistant of the Clutching Hand who had waited while Taylor Dodge was electrocuted, was waiting as his confederate, "Pitts Slim"—which indicated that he was both wiry in stature and libelous in delegating his nativity—made the attempt.

As Slim came tumbling down, having fallen back from the window above mortally wounded, the confederate lifted him up and carried him out of sight hurriedly.

Elaine, by this time, had turned on the lights and had run to the window to look out. Rusty was barking loudly.

In a side street near by stood a waiting automobile, at the wheel of which sat another of the emissaries of the Clutching Hand. The driver looked up, startled, as he saw his fellow hurry around the corner carrying the wounded "Pitts Slim." It was the work of just a moment to drop the wounded man, as comfortably as possible under the circumstances, in the rear seat, while his pals started the car off with a jerk in the hurry of escape.

Jennings, having hastily slipped his trousers on over his pajamas, came running down the hall, while Marie, frightened, came in the other direction. Aunt Josephine appeared a few seconds later, adding to the general excitement.

"What's the matter?" she asked, anxiously.

"A burglar, I think," exclaimed Elaine, still holding the gun in her

hand. "Someone tried to get into my window."

"My gracious!" cried Aunt Josephine, in alarm. "Where will this thing end?"

"Well," Elaine laughed, a little nervously, now that it was all over, "I want you all to go to bed and stop worrying about me. Don't you see I'm perfectly able to take care of myself? Besides, there isn't a chance now of the burglar coming back. Why, I shot him."

"Yes," put in Aunt Josephine, "but—"

Elaine laughingly interrupted her and playfully made as though she were driving them out of her room.

"Rusty!" she called. "Down, there!"

The intelligent collie seemed to understand. He lay down by the doorway, his nose close to the bottom of the door, and his ears alert.

Finally Elaine, too, retired again. Meanwhile the wounded man was being hurried to one of the hangouts of the mysterious Clutching Hand.

The car containing the wounded "Pitts Slim" drew up, and the other two men leaped out of it. With a hurried glance about they unlocked the front door with a pass key and entered, carrying the man.

Indoors was another emissary of the Clutching Hand, a rather studious-looking chap.

"Why, what's the matter?" he exclaimed as the crooks entered his room supporting their half-fainting, wounded pal.

"Slim got a couple of pills," they panted as they laid him on a couch.

"How?" demanded the other.

"Trying to get into the Dodge house. Elaine did it."

Slim was, quite evidently, badly wounded and was bleeding profusely. A glance at him was enough for the studious-looking chap. He went to a secret panel and, pressing it down, took out what was apparently a secret house telephone.

In another part of this mysterious house was the secret room of the Clutching Hand himself, where he hid his identity from even his most trusted followers.

His telephone rang and he took down the receiver.

"Pitts Slim's been wounded, badly, chief," was all he waited to hear.

With scarcely a word he hung up the receiver, then opened a table drawer and took out a full face mask. Next he went to a nearby bookcase, pressed another secret spring, and a panel opened. He passed through, the mask adjusted.

Across, in the larger outside study, another panel opened, and the Clutching Hand, all crouched up, transformed, appeared. Without a word he advanced to the couch on which the wounded crook lay, and examined him.

"How did it happen?" he asked at length.

"Miss Dodge shot him," answered the others, "with an automatic."

"That Craig Kennedy must have given it to her!" he exclaimed with suppressed fury.

For a moment the Clutching Hand stopped to consider. Then he seized the regular telephone.

"Doctor Martin?" he asked, as he got the number he called.

Late as it was, the doctor, who was a well-known surgeon in that part of the country, answered from an extension of his telephone near his bed.

The call was urgent, and apparently from a family which he did not feel that he could neglect.

Doctor Martin was a middle-aged man, one of those medical men on whose judgment one instinctively relies.

It was only a matter of minutes before the doctor was speeding over the now deserted suburban roads, apparently on an errand of mercy.

At the address that had been given him he drew up to the side of the road, got out and ran up the steps to the door. A ring at the bell brought a sleepy man to the door, in his trousers and nightshirt.

"How's the patient?" asked Doctor Martin, eagerly.

"Patient!" repeated the man, rubbing his eyes. "There's no one sick here."

Slowly it dawned on the doctor that it was a false alarm, and that he must be the victim of some practical joke.

"Well, that's a great note," he growled, as the man shut the door.

He descended the steps, muttering harsh language at some unknown trickster. As he climbed back into his machine and made ready to start two men seemed to rise before him as if from nowhere.

As a matter of fact they had been sent there by the Clutching Hand, and were hiding in a nearby cellarway until their chance came.

One man stood on the running board, on either side of him, and two guns yawned menacingly at him.

"Drive ahead that way!" muttered one man, seating himself in the runabout with his gun close to the doctor's ribs.

The other kept his place on the running board, and on they drove in the

direction of the mysterious, dark house. Half a mile, perhaps, down the road, they halted and left the car beside the walk.

Doctor Martin was too surprised to marvel at anything now, and he realized that he was in the power of two desperate men. Quickly they blindfolded him.

It seemed an interminable walk, as they led him about to confuse him, but at last he could feel that they had taken him into a house and along passageways, which they were making unnecessarily long in order to destroy all recollection that they could.

Finally he knew that he was in a room in which others were present.

A moment later he felt them remove the bandage from his eyes, and, blinking at the light, he could see a hard-faced fellow, pale and weak, on a blood-stained couch. Over him bent a masked man and another man stood near by endeavoring by improvised bandages to stop the flow of blood.

"What can you do for this fellow?" asked the masked man.

Doctor Martin, seeing nothing else to do, for he was more than outnumbered now, bent down and examined him.

As he rose, he said, "He will be dead from loss of blood by morning, no matter if he is properly bandaged."

"Is there nothing that can save him?" whispered the Clutching Hand hoarsely.

"Blood transfusion might save him," replied the doctor. "But so much blood would be needed that whoever gives it would be liable to die himself."

Clutching Hand stood silent a moment, thinking, as he gazed at the man who had been one of his chief reliance. Then, with a menacing gesture, he spoke in a low, bitter tone:

"She who shot him shall supply the blood."

A few quick directions followed to his subordinates, and as he made ready to go he muttered, "Keep the doctor here. Don't let him stir from the room."

It was just before early daybreak when the Clutching Hand and his confederate reached the Dodge house in the city and came up to the back door, over the fences. As they stood there the Clutching Hand produced a master key and started to open the door. But before he did so he took out his watch.

"Let me see," he ruminated. "Twenty minutes past 4. At exactly half past I want you to do as I told you—see?"

The other crook nodded.

"You may go," ordered the Clutching Hand.

As the crook slunk away Clutching Hand stealthily let himself into the house. Noiselessly he prowled through the halls until he came to Elaine's doorway.

He gave a hasty look up and down the hall. There was no sound. Quickly



Holding his Hand Over Elaine's Mouth to Prevent Her Screaming. He Snatched the Revolver Away Before She Could Fire It.

he took a syringe from his pocket and bent down by the door. Inserting the end under it, he squirted some liquid through, which vaporized rapidly in a wide, fine stream of spray. Before he could give an alarm Rusty was overcome by the noxious fumes, rolled over on his back and lay still.

Outside, the other crook was waiting, looking at his watch. As the hand slowly turned the half-hour he snapped the watch shut. With a quick glance up and down the deserted street, he deftly started up the rain pipe that passed near Elaine's window.

This time there was no faithful Rusty to give warning, and the second intruder, after a glance at Elaine, still sleeping, went quickly to the door, dragged the insensible dog out of the way, turned the key and admitted the Clutching Hand. As he did so he closed the door.

Evidently the fumes had not reached Elaine, or, if they had, the lush of fresh air revived her, for she waked and quickly reached for the gun. In an instant the other crook had leaped at her. Holding his hand over her mouth to prevent her screaming, he snatched the revolver away before she could fire it.

In the meantime the Clutching Hand had taken out some chloroform, and, rolling a towel in the form of a cone, placed it over her face.

When Elaine was completely under the influence of the drug they lifted

her out of bed, the chloroform cone still over her face, and quietly carried her to the door, which they had opened stealthily.

Down stairs they carried her until they came to the library with its new safe where they placed her on a couch.

At an early hour an express wagon stopped before the Dodge house and Jennings, half-dressed, answered the bell.

"We've come for that broken suit of armor to be repaired," said a workman.

Jennings let the men in. The armor was still on the stand and the repairs took armor, stand and all, laying it on the couch, where they wrapped it in the covers they had brought for the purpose. They lifted it up and started to carry it out.

"Be careful," cautioned the thrifty Jennings.

Rusty, now recovered, was barking and sniffing at the armor.

"Kick the butt off," growled one man.

The other did so, and Rusty snarled and snapped at him. Jennings took him by the collar and held him as the repairs went out, loaded the armor on the wagon, and drove off.

Scarcely had they gone, while Jennings straightened out the disarranged library, when Rusty began jumping about, barking furiously. Jennings looked at him in amazement as the dog ran to the window and leaped out.

He had no time to look after the dog, though, for at that very instant he heard a voice calling, "Jennings, Jennings!"

It was Marie, almost speechless. He followed her as she led the way to Miss Elaine's room. There Marie pointed mutely to the bed.

Elaine was not there.

There, too were her clothes, neatly folded, as Marie had hung them for her.

"Something must have happened to her!" wailed Marie.

Jennings was now thoroughly alarmed.

Meanwhile the express wagon outside was driving off, with Rusty tearing after it.

"What's the matter?" cried Aunt Josephine, coming in where the footman and the maid were arguing what was to be done.

She gave one look at her bed, the clothes, and the servants.

"Call Mr. Kennedy!" she cried in alarm.

"Elaine is gone—no one knows how or where," announced Craig, after leaping out of bed that morning to answer the furious ringing of our telephone bell.

When we arrived at the Dodge house Aunt Josephine and Marie were fully dressed. Jennings let us in.

"What has happened?" demanded Kennedy, breathlessly.

While Aunt Josephine tried to tell

him, Craig was busy examining the room.

"Let us see the library," he said at length.

Accordingly down to the library we went. Kennedy looked about. He seemed to miss something.

"Where is the armor?" he demanded.

"Why, the men came for it and took it away to repair," answered Jennings.

Kennedy's brow clouded in deep thought.

Outside we had left our taxi waiting. The door was open and a new footman, James, was sweeping the rug when past him flashed a disheveled hairy streak.

We were all standing there still as Craig questioned Jennings about the armor. With a yelp Rusty tore frantically into the room. A moment he stopped and barked. We all looked at him in surprise. Then, as no one moved, he seemed to single out Kennedy. He seized Craig's coat in his teeth and tried to drag him out.

"Here, Rusty—down, sir, down!" called Jennings.

"No; Jennings, no," interposed Craig. "What's the matter, old fellow?"

Craig patted Rusty, whose big brown eyes seemed mutely appealing. Out of the doorway he went, barking still. Craig and I followed, while the rest stood in the vestibule.

Rusty was trying to lead Kennedy down the street.

"Wait here," called Kennedy to Aunt Josephine, as he stepped with me on the running board of the cab. "Go on, Rusty; good dog!"

It seemed miles that we went, but at last we came to a peculiarly deserted looking house. Here Rusty turned in and began scratching at the door. We jumped off the cab and followed.

The door was locked when we tried it, and from inside we could get no answer. We put our shoulders to it and burst it in. Rusty gave a leap forward with a joyous bark.

We followed more cautiously. There were pieces of armor strewn all over the floor. Rusty sniffed at them and looked about, disappointed, then howled.

I looked from the armor to Kennedy in blank amazement.

"Elaine was kidnapped—in the armor," he cried.

He was right. Meanwhile, the armor repairs had stopped at last at this apparently deserted house, a strange sort of repair shop. Still keeping it wrapped in blankets, they had taken the armor out of the wagon and had laid it down on an old broken bed. Then they had unwrapped it and taken off the helmet.

There was Elaine!

"Sh! What's that?" cautioned one of the men.

They paused and listened. Sure enough, there was a sound outside. They opened the window cautiously. A dog was scratching on the door, endeavoring to get in. It was Rusty.

"I think it's her dog," said the man, turning. "We'd better let him in. Someone might see him."

The other nodded and a moment later the door opened and in ran Rusty. Straight to Elaine he went, starting to lick her hand.

"Right—her dog," exclaimed the other man, drawing a gun and hastily leveling it at Rusty.

"Don't cautioned the first. 'It would make too much noise. You'd better choke him!'"

The fellow grabbed for Rusty. Rusty was too quick. He jumped. Around the room they ran. Rusty saw the wide-open window—and his chance. Out he went and disappeared, leaving the man swearing at him.

A moment's argument followed, then they wrapped Elaine in the blankets alone, still bound and gagged, and carried her out.

In the secret den the Clutching Hand was waiting, gazing now and then at his watch, and then at the wounded man before him. In a chair his first assistant sat, watching Doctor Martin.

A knock at the door caused them to turn their heads. The crook opened it, and in walked the other crooks who had carried off Elaine in the suit of armor.

Elaine was now almost conscious, as they sat her down in a chair, and partly loosed her bonds and gag. She gazed about, frightened.

"Oh, help! help!" she screamed, as she caught sight of the new familiar mask of the Clutching Hand.

"Call all you want—here, young lady," he laughed unnaturally.

"Now, doc," he added harshly to Doctor Martin. "It was she who shot him. Her blood must save him."

Doctor Martin recoiled at the thought of torturing the beautiful young girl before him.

"Are you willing—to have your blood transfused?" he parleyed.

"No, no, no!" she cried in horror.

Doctor Martin turned to the desperate criminal. "I cannot do it."

"The device you can't."

A cold steel revolver pressed down on Doctor Martin's stomach.

The other crooks next carried Elaine, struggling, and threw her down beside the wounded man.

Doctor Martin, still covered by the gun, bent over the two, the hardened criminal and the delicate, beautiful girl. Clutching Hand glared fiendishly, insanely.

From his bag he took a little piece of something that shone like silver. A moment later, Doctor Martin looked up at the Clutching Hand and nodded. "Well, it's working!"

All were now bending over the two. Doctor Martin bent closest over Elaine. He looked at her anxiously, felt her pulse, watched her breathing, then pursed up his lips.

"This is—dangerous," he ventured, gazing askance at the grim Clutching Hand.

"Can't help it," came back laconically, and relentlessly.

The doctor shuddered.

The man was a veritable vampire.

Outside the deserted house, Kennedy and I were looking helplessly about.

Suddenly Kennedy reached into his pocket and produced and pulled out a police whistle. He blew three sharp blasts.

Would it bring help?

While we were thus despairing, the continued absence of Doctor Martin from his home had alarmed his family, and had set in motion another train of events.

When he did not return, and could not be located at the place to which he was supposed to have gone, several policemen had been summoned to his house, and they had come, finally, with real bloodhounds from a suburban station.

the officer, eyeing Kennedy suspiciously as he stood there with the armor. "What's them pieces of tin—hey?"

Kennedy quickly flashed his own special badge. "I want to trail a girl," he exclaimed hurriedly. "Can I find a bloodhound about here?"

"A hound? Why, we have a pack—over there."

"Bring them—quick!" ordered Craig. Kennedy held the armor down to the dogs. "Searchlight" gave a low whine, then, followed by "Bob" and the others, was off, all with noses close to the ground. We followed.

In the mysterious haunt of the Clutching Hand, all were still standing around Elaine and the wounded Pitts Slim.

Just then a cry from one of the group startled the rest. One of them, less hardened than the Clutching Hand, had turned away from the sight, had gone to the window, and had been attracted by something outside.

"Look!" he cried.

From the absolute stillness of death there was now wild excitement among the crooks.

"Police! Police!" they shouted to each other as they fled by a doorway to a secret passage.

Clutching Hand turned to his first assistant.

"You go, too," he ordered.

The dogs had led us to a strange looking house, and were now baying



"Elaine Was Kidnaped—in the Armor," Cried Kennedy.

and leaping up against the door. We did not stop to knock, but began to break through, for inside we could hear faint sounds of excitement and cries of "Police! Police!"

The door yielded and we rushed into a long hallway. Up the passage we went until we came to another door.

An instant and we were all against it. It was stout, but it shook before us. The panels began to yield.

On the other side of that door from us the master crook stood for a moment. Doctor Martin hesitated, not knowing quite what to do.